

Case Study 17.2. TechFounders Program at Technical University Munich (TUM)

CRITICAL AREA OF FOCUS 2: “Assessing IP potential, validating technologies and incentivizing for commercialisation”

BEST PRACTICE FOR: “Technology Accelerators”

AIMED AT: TTO/Researcher/Industry

UNIVERSITY: Technical University Munich (TUM) (Germany)

TTO: UnternehmerTUM



The context:

The **Technical University Munich (TUM)** is one of the biggest Universities of Technology in Germany with 40,000 students enrolled and a staff of 10,000. Core research areas are engineering, natural sciences and medicine but many areas are covered too.

UnternehmerTUM is the Center for Innovation and Business Creation at TUM since 2002 with a staff of over 50 who accompany and support PRO spin-outs and established companies from initial ideas to commercialized products when founding new businesses. It is organized in several GmbH, a German form for limited liability companies.

The problem:

Cultivating entrepreneurship is a hard task in a university setting. The **bridge between academics and business** is often large and there is little to no communication. Without an overarching mission/vision it is impossible to truly create this entrepreneurial culture and make sure that the R&D input gets commercialized.

The solution:

In 2002, **UnternehmerTUM** was founded, to be an accelerator and hub for innovation and business creation for the university and the business environment. The primary objective of UnternehmerTUM GmbH is incentivizing via information and education the TTO staff for commercialization of their developed ideas/technologies, therefore the qualifications of students, scientists, entrepreneurs and business professionals are increased by training by the TTO.

Participants are trained to perform technology valuation, perform an IP assessment and they are introduced to Business Design – innovative tool offerings skills of entrepreneurship and innovation management.

The TUM strongly believes that students should know **what is needed on the market** to create valuable technology and IP and learn the key skills for the creation of their own business. The knowledge of what IP is valuable, which is less valuable and how to commercialize it is vital.

UnternehmerTUM offers the **TechFounders programme**. This is a 3-month international accelerator programme in Munich which brings tech startups, industry and venture capitalists together. Participants get 25.000 Euro funding and access to office space, the possibility to attend the UnternehmerTUM hightech workshop called „MakerSpace“ and to obtain on-demand expert coaching for maturing their technologies. While in the programme, the startups will work closely together with partners from the industry with the aim to cooperate with one of them and attract the interest of a high-class customer or investor. The TechFounders programme itself requires no fee and does not take any equity in the startups.

UnternehmerTUM makes itself relevant for different target groups and has different methods and programmes with regards to how to approach them. For students at TUM, the Technology Entrepreneurship Lab is the opportunity to identify and growth new business ideas using new technologies from the university's laboratories. For engineers and scientist in the medical sciences, the MedTech Bootcamp is a 5 days seminar where teams can work together with coaches and experts on the business model for their technology, develop their teams and network in this specific industry.



Alignment to PROGRESS-TT:

This case is a good illustration of the “Technology Accelerators” Best Practice in PROGRESS-TT Critical Area of Focus 2 “Assessing IP potential, validating technologies and incentivizing for commercialisation”.

TUM has developed itself to be one of the most renowned universities in Germany and Europe as a whole. They have attracted large corporate companies to work together, and have well known contributors and sponsors. (f. ex. Susanne Klatten, owns 18% of BMW). TUM has won various awards and prizes: the award for ‘Technology and Excellence’ in 2005, the German Employer’s prize for Education in 2007, and has already been selected by the EU as a Best Practice for University Business Cooperation. Over 150 business plans are developed every year in special business plan seminars.

TUM certainly benefits from having access to some of the largest and most renowned companies in the world, and some of the most famous institutes in the state of Bavaria. While this provides an advantage, it is their philosophy of being an entrepreneurial university that enables successful interaction. They work extremely hard to create and maintain these collaborations and the networks vital for their success.

The most transferable element from this BP is the **integration of business partners** into all aspects of the university, one major part being the lectures themselves. There are several programs targeted at spinning out technologies and creating new businesses for university researchers and students. This hands-on approach on accelerating is relatively cheap and fast but intensive and close to potential customers.

Original from [TUM] Original release of [03 18 2016]. Last revised, [03 18 2016].

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Project-2016

